

South Street Seaport Museum,
251 Water Street
(John Eitel Building)
New York City
New York County
New York

HABS No. NY-5685

HABS
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31-NY
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM
251 WATER STREET
(John Eitel Building)

HABS No. NY-5685

Location: 251 Water Street, 20 Peck Slip,
Corner of Water Street and Peck Slip,
New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: Berbor Corporation

Present Occupant: Vacant

Significance: This store and tenement building was designed by Carl F. Eisenbach for John N. Eitel in 1888. It is a very handsome red brick and terra cotta building with broad ground floor arches and foliate terra cotta ornament, especially on the tympanum above the residential entrance on Water Street. Some terra cotta faces remain centered on the fourth floor terra cotta window lintels although vandals have removed several of them.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1888. A New Building Application #731 was filed in 1888.
2. Architect: Carl F. Eisenbach, John McKeefrey was the builder.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The building stands on Block 97W, Lot 57. Information for the following chain of title comes from the New York City Conveyance Records, Surrogate's Court.

March 18, 1853

Liber 630; p. 492
Phebe Frost
widow of
Jarvis Frost
(Exr. of)
to
John M. Eitel
(Release of Dower)

June 15, 1908

Liber 119; p. 79
John N. Eitel
(Exr. of and Trustee of)
to William Greve (Trustee)
Edward Weisberger

May 13, 1921

Liber 3222; p. 311
Isaac N. Sieveright
(Will of)
Eitel, John N. (Dec'd)
to
Reuben Hafter and Frank Maibach

Dec. 14, 1938

Liber 3998; p. 161
Frank Maibach
to
Henry J. Herzog

March 10, 1943

Liber 4195; p. 318
Henry J. Herzog
to
Abe Maibach

May 2, 1947

Liber 4510; p. 1.
Philip Werfel
Max Kalman
Leon Corenthel
to
Abe Maibach
Lots 31 and 57

November 19, 1953

Liber 4858; p. 638
Abe Maibach
to
Abe and Lester Maibach

December 4, 1957

Liber 5021; p. 527
Lester H. Maibach
to
Sidonia Maibach
(Quit claim, lots 31 and 57)

November 10, 1961

Liber 5168; p. 89
Abe and Sidonia Maibach
to
Berbor Corp.

44. Original plan and construction: In 1888, this building was built as a five-story store and dwelling at a cost of \$12,000; two families resided on each floor. Plans filed with the Buildings Department show that the building looks very much as it did when first constructed. It is a red brick Romanesque Revival/Italianate building with foliated terra cotta ornament. The cornice seems to have been removed and the door arrangement on the Peck Slip facade has changed. The middle bay, now a door, was a window on the plans and the left-hand bay, a window, appeared as a door on the plans.

5. Alterations and additions: In 1922, owners Reuben Hafter and Frank Maibach hired architect Abraham Farber and contractor Louis Sessler to do some minor stair alterations for \$500. In 1928 the same owners had architect Charles M. Straub convert the second-story into a dental office.

B. Historical Context:

1. The store and tenement at 251 Water Street/20 Peck Slip was constructed for John N. Eitel whose clothing business had occupied the previous building on the site; he did not continue to occupy the new store.
2. Edward Weisberger, who owned the building from 1897 until 1908, had a liquor store at 148 Delancey Street.
3. By 1921, Level Fish Co., Inc. occupied the building with Reuben Hafter as president and Henry J. Herzog as treasurer,

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

See accompanying HABS photographs of the structure for a visual observation.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

New York City Conveyance Records, Surrogate's Court.

New York City Tax Records, Municipal Archives, 23 Park Row.

New York City Department of Buildings, Municipal Building, New Building Application #731 (1888), full set of plans available. Alteration application #3117 (1922); #388 (1928).

New York City Directories, New York Public Library.

Roberts, Lee and Steinke, Nancy, "Inventory of Structures in the Brooklyn Bridge S. E. Urban Renewal Area," New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, May 1968, p. 12.

Rosebrock, Ellen "South Street Seaport Historic District," New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1974, p. 14.

Prepared by: Lori Zabar
HABS Project Historian
Summer 1976

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The South Street Seaport project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, with the co-operation of the South Street Seaport Museum, Inc. Recording was carried out during the summer of 1976 by Frederick W. Wiedenmann (HABS Washington, D.C. office) project supervisor; Lori Zabar (Columbia University), project historian; Robert Lee Wiltse (Louisiana State University), architect; and student architects-Barry Lee Gill (North Dakota State University), Joe E. Price (Texas Tech University), and John R. Temmink (University of Virginia). Susan McCown, a HABS historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. Walter Smalling, Jr. of the National Park Service took the photographs of the South Street Seaport structures.